

# Tahquitz Plaza declared historic

## Council votes to save '70s office buildings

Skip Descant  
The Desert Sun

The shadow of the wrecking ball will no longer hang over Tahquitz Plaza, the collection of 1970s-era modernist Pueblo style office buildings in Palm Springs.

The Palm Springs City Council voted unanimously to grant the four buildings, designed by longtime local architect Hugh Kaptur, with Class I Historic Site status Wednesday night. The designation protects the structures from demolition, and carefully controls their renovation.

"We heard through the election period that, you know, people felt very passionately about Tahquitz Plaza," Cory Alder, president of Nexus Development, the buildings' owner, told the City Council. "We started listening."

After months of opposing historic preservation protections for Tahquitz Plaza, Nexus has become its latest ally, and company officials say they plan to renovate the structures for future use.

"We intend to explore a wide array of possible adaptive reuses for the build-

Please see PLAZA, 4A



## Plaza

Continued from 3A

ings, including office, restaurant, retail and other commercial uses," Alder said in an email. "Our goal is to find the best use for the buildings while maintaining their historical significance."

Members of the city's preservation community began meeting several weeks ago with Nexus to work toward an agreement where property owners would not only change their mind about demolition, but rally to restore the structures.

"This is an example of how things can go well with the development community, with the preservation community and the whole city," said Peter Moruzzi, secretary of the Palm Springs Moderns Committee, a preservation group.

"Overall, in addition to designation, the key issues are that Nexus has agreed to restore Tahquitz Plaza according to rigorous federal rehabilitation standards, then offer the buildings for lease or sale," Moruzzi added in a follow-up email. "And, remarkably, original architect Hugh Kaptur will consult on the rehabilitation."

"I'm very honored and humbled to think that one of my projects would be marked for No. 1 designa-

tion, while I'm still alive," said Kaptur, who added "I would also like to say that I would be happy to contribute my time to the renovation of Tahquitz Plaza."

The Tahquitz Plaza debate has been unfolding for months. Earlier this year, Nexus approached the city with plans to demolish the buildings to clear the way for Aberdeen, a 91-unit mixed-use development on the site. That plan never received approval by the city's Planning Commission, in part because the design held too many flaws, commissioners said at the time.

The historic designation for Tahquitz Plaza marked the first issue to be taken up by the newly sworn-in members of the City Council: J.R. Roberts and Geoff Kers. It was also the first meeting of newly elected Mayor Robert Moon.

"It's the perfect storm to be looking at a Class I designation on an historic building, to have the owner and the applicant of that designation to be supporting that Class I designation is rare and wonderful and I guess just sort of a gift to us for our first meeting tonight," Roberts said.

Skip Descant covers tourism for The Desert Sun. Reach him at Skip.Descant@DesertSun.com and on Twitter @TDSkip

